

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF GRATITUDE

By Floyd Thomas Pratt F.H.C., M.A.G.I. 2015

Good Morning Brothers and Sisters, my name is Bro. Pratt and I have been asked to give a talk this Sacrament Meeting of the 26th of April 2015 based on the talk of President Uchtdorf of April conference 2014 titled **"Grateful in Any Circumstances"**.

The title of my talk is **"Planting the Seeds of Gratitude"**.

Part of our experiences while on the Earth is dealing with hardships, conflict, trials and tribulations. These troublesome events are sometimes brought on by our own actions and choices. Other conflicts are a result of unrighteous choices our family, friends and neighbors thrust upon us. In any case we all have to deal with conflict and troubles.

It is hard to be grateful when your world is crashing down around your ears and it appears these trials are beyond your capability. Some of these trials can be due to the following...

- [1] Dissolution of a marriage or relationship
- [2] Death of a family member or friend
- [3] A lack of sufficient financial means to meet your needs
- [4] Estrangement from a family member
- [5] A lack of marriage or an inability to bear children
- [6] Failing health issues

And the most serious of all...

- [7] Losing your commitment to the Plan of Salvation and struggling with faith issues

All of these trials are very serious and require your immediate attention in order to steady your ship in a world of stormy waters.

I cannot remember any time in my life, where one troublesome event after another came at me and taxed my efforts and resolve as this time we now live in. The Savior has said he has kept his greatest spirits in reserve for these last days as has Lucifer kept his worst spirits to torment and aggravate the saints in these perilous times.

But cheer up, you have made the right choices...that's why you are here and Father has further knowledge, education and training for you and going through these trials and troubled times is all part of this training.

Remember, these are starter bodies and how we control our appetites, desires, thoughts, speech and actions will determine if we get an "upgrade" after this life.

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Father has placed our spirit in these bodies to control the flesh and not to be controlled by the desires, appetites and passions of the flesh.

Let's see how we can overcome the speed bumps of life, which slow us down, from our spiritual progression.

DISSOLUTION OF A MARRIAGE OR RELATIONSHIP

Sometimes the relationship between a man and a woman becomes corrupted. This corruption interferes with their goals, dreams and eternal happiness.

Conflict raises it's ugly head and instead of kind, loving and thoughtful words, are replaced with hurtful, anger, hostility and fear enters into what was once a happy relationship.

When I have observed these problems the first thing I ask these troubled couples...when was the last time they read the scriptures together? My next question is...when was the last time you had family prayer together?

I have found the first causality to a loving relationship is when they cut off their communication to our Heavenly Father. Our Heavenly Father is the very fountain of love, knowledge and truth, which can be tuned off by anger, jealousy and self-serving interests.

We are not programmed for failure, Heavenly Father and all the angels are rooting for us to succeed and he knows these speed bumps in life, if handled properly, will eventually get you and your spouse to your goals of eternal life and companionship with family, friends and most important our Heavenly parents.

Consequently, when you have conflict in your relationship with spouse, children and/or parents, be mindful and grateful you have help across the veil and working with his guidance, assistance and council from his servants in this very church, you can overcome these hard feelings and through repentance you can again find the happiness you once shared in your relationship.

Another stressful and hurtful problem we have to deal with is the passing of a family member or friend.

DEATH OF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

Even though we know death is part of our spiritual progression and a necessary part of the Plan of Salvation, we still have a hard time with the loss of fellowship we once shared with our loved ones.

As Latter Day Saints we share covenants and promises, which no other religion, institution or entity on this earth has. We know what the next life holds for our loved ones.

Mourning for the loss of a loved one is natural. We should be grateful they no longer suffer with pain and we should be thankful to our Heavenly Father for helping them continue their eternal progression.

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As Latter Day Saints, we know we will see them again and we are comforted and happy they have fought the good fight and we will be joining them soon.

I counsel my wife and children do not mourn for me, but be more concerned for your spiritual well being and hold fast to the iron rod...I will be waiting for you.

Bonnie and I became members of this church in December 1975 and began family history research immediately. One of the first people we sent paperwork to have temple work performed was for Bonnie's father Robert Louis Bach, who died in 1970.

In 1983, we lived on a farm outside of Marshfield, Missouri and Bonnie's sister; Melanie, who is not a member, came to visit. Melanie had had night terrors in the mid 1970's concerning her father and sought therapy to resolve those issues. Her therapist recommended she keep a dream journal upon awakening from a nightmare.

As she shared those nightmares with us in Marshfield, she told us of the last dream she had concerning her father. She said she saw him in a pale robe holding a file folder on his arm. He was arising, as if on an escalator. He turned to her and said, "I won't be seeing you for a time, I'm going on."

Bonnie and I asked her when this dream took place and she said it was written down in her journal and she would find it and call us when she returned home to California.

When she called, she informed us this dream took place in the spring of 1977. We checked Bob's temple work and found all his ordinances had been completed in the spring of 1977.

How grateful we are to our Heavenly Father for the Plan of Salvation and the knowledge families can be together forever.

Another speed bump in our journey through this life is a lack of sufficient financial means to meet our needs.

A LACK OF SUFFICIENT FINANCIAL MEANS TO MEET OUR NEEDS

All of us at one time in our lives worry about money. There seems never to be enough of it or if we have plenty, we worry about losing it.

There are several avenues we can try to ease this troublesome worry.

The first and foremost act to easing financial worries is to pay your tithing and fast offerings. Nothing will open the coffers of heaven faster than a full tithe payer.

The next action would be to seek council from you Bishop. He will help you explore all avenues of resources such as, are you spending your money foolishly, are you buying unnecessary items such as electronics, support services, luxury items? Are you buying, new items when used items still work and are sufficient for your needs?

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It is one of the Devil's missions to make you envy your neighbors and to become dissatisfied with your lot in life.

The shameful way advertisers are allowed to aim their commercials at adults and children, trying to entice you to spend your hard earned money on frivolous items is deplorable.

Another avenue is to council with your employer. If you have not received a wage increase in over a year, seeking an audience with your employer concerning this subject may be fruitful and productive.

Increase your education to become qualified for a higher wage vocation.

When you have done all you can do, and all else fails, and in your mind you seem to be at an impasse, taking your concerns and worries to your Heavenly Father will not only result in the desired effect, but will instill in you an attitude of gratitude for his love and assistance.

Another speed bump in our lives has to do with estrangement from a family member.

ESTRANGEMENT FROM A FAMILY MEMBER

Misunderstandings, failure to communicate, lack of empathy, pride, indifference, lack of humility, and failure to repent are some of the causes for estrangements.

There is no right and wrong concerning any issue that may be causing a conflict in a relationship. Failure to compromise is always at the root of estrangements.

It angers me to see warring armies ask Heavenly Father to take sides in an issue concerning war. These governments, politicians, and generals all ask for Heavenly Father's blessing while they exercise violence, death and destruction some claiming it is his will.

Heavenly Father is on **HIS** side and does not take sides in conflicts. He defeats his enemies on his timetable, using his resources and resolves conflicts on his terms. He does not need his saints to go to war and shed blood, don't you remember the 185,00 Assyrians?

When we as Latter Day Saints have differences with our family members, there is no right and wrong but our duty is to find common ground and compromise to resolve our differences of opinions.

Where these estrangements continue, is where one or both parties will not yield to a common good for both sides of the issue.

Many of us have children and parents who are not active in the church and we are deeply concerned concerning their spiritual welfare. We may be angry concerning their decisions, lifestyle, choices, and occupations. This anger is unfounded and has its roots in unrighteousness.

Sometimes, we have blinders on and can only see what is in front of us and we fail to remember these spirits, our family members, are eternal and have to make their own choices and decisions.

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We are commanded to give them their space and to allow them to make their own decisions, and when at some future time, maybe not in our lifetime, they decide to return to the fold, this is in accordance with the Plan of Salvation.

If you have done all you were commanded to do, when you raised your children, then you will be justified. Be patient, be loving, be supportive and be kind.

Think from an eternal aspect and you will find peace and if your relationship improves while in this life, then oh happy day and be grateful to your Heavenly Father. Do not underestimate the Plan of Salvation, as I did not think my father would be interested in any religion, his actions in the Temple proved otherwise.

Another concern some have to deal with is a lack of marriage or an inability to bear children.

A LACK OF MARRIAGE OR AN INABILITY TO BEAR CHILDREN

Many of our single men and woman are deeply concerned about finding a mate while they tarry on this earth. Especially, if they are aware of the Plan of Salvation and the concept of eternal marriage.

Many feel if they do not get married, they will be left out or not find happiness. This is a fallacy and is incorrect and needs to be addressed.

The Lord loves us so much, he would rather you spend your days on earth in service to your brethren than to be married in a wrong or improper relationship. More damage has been done to spouses and children due to broken homes than any other calamity.

Those worthy brothers and sisters need not feel anxiety or apprehension because they have not found their eternal helpmate. If you do not find your eternal partner in this life, you will have a 1000 years during the Millennium to find your spouse.

Remember, temples will be operating 24/7 during that time and all those who never received the blessings of the Plan of Salvation will have an opportunity to fulfill their dreams.

Those sisters who have not bore children in this life will have the opportunity to bear children and those who have lost children in this life will have the opportunity to raise those children to full stature during the Millennium. No one is lost, all receives the Plan of Salvation and all decides his or her destiny.

Another stumbling block in the road of life is failing health issues.

FAILING HEALTH ISSUES

Some of us are preoccupied with our failing health or the failing health of a loved one. Some of these health issues are life threatening and some are a minor nuisance.

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Sometimes these illnesses consume all our efforts, energies, money and time trying to combat their influences in our lives and the lives of our loved ones.

Some of these illnesses result in depression, inactivity, loneliness and self-pity. In my opinion this type of problem is the hardest to overcome.

If your illness does not bed-ridden you, then I have found a cure to the above problem.

When I was a young man in my early twenties selling insurance, I would often go to nursing homes and collect insurance premiums from older people.

As I walked in this one nursing home, I was overwhelmed by the sadness and loneliness of these elderly men and women and found when I visited them they were so glad to see me, they wanted to talk about their lives and families and the more time I spent with them the happier they seemed to be.

It broke my heart to see one lady in a wheel chair outside her room and as I walked by I smiled at her and stopped for a few words. I asked her how she was doing and she looked at me and eagerly replied in a shaky voice, "Are you my son?"

I immediately became sad because, no, I was not her son and how her eyes wanted me to be her son and I realized I could do tremendous good by just visiting these "lost" souls and offering a few kind words. This was a lesson I retained all my life and when I feel lost or wallow in self-pity, I find great pleasure in going to a nursing home or a hospital and just visiting those in need and offering a few words of kindness.

I guess that's why I enjoy home teaching, I get to spread a few seeds of gratitude to others knowing all goodness I emulate, is but a reflection of my Heavenly Father.

When unhappy, sad or feeling ill, call one of your sisters or a brother in the church and ask them to go with you to visit the elderly, sick or infirmed especially your own family members and all of you will be thankful and grateful for these visits.

As the Savior said in Mosiah 2-17 "And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God."

The last and most serious of the speed bumps of life is losing your commitment to the Plan of Salvation and struggling with faith issues.

LOSING THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE PLAN OF SALVATION AND STRUGGLING WITH FAITH ISSUES

When doubt creeps in concerning your commitment to the Plan of Salvation and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, this is a cancer that will grow and eventually consume your soul if not addressed immediately.

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First of all, all of us are not immune to this doubt and the world will do its best to encourage your departure offering you ALL of the worldly pleasures you can handle. The world cares not for your well-being and gladly will escort your soul to Lucifer's domain.

To combat this spiritual decline one must first realize **YOU** once had a testimony of the Savior, this church, the Plan of Salvation and you have witnessed miracles, and blessings...what happened?

Sometimes this condition in fact, mostly all the times these things happen with small steps in the wrong direction. Failure to observe, church attendance, failure to pay tithing, failure to attend the temple, failure to read the scriptures and failure to keep communication open through prayer to our Heavenly Father are small steps.

All of these are small steps lead to big consequences. When any of these signs begin to manifest themselves think of the following recovery actions so healing can take place.

[1] First, visit with the Bishop and heed his advice and council.

[2] Second, the Bishop will open up a link with our Heavenly Father and promote and invoke through faith...healing blessings on your behalf.

[3] Third, read the Old and New Testament, the Book of Mormon, The Pearl of Great Price and the Doctrine of Covenants. As you read those standard works, buy copies of the Institute books covering each of those subjects and read the scriptures using the institute books as a companion.

You will have a new understanding of the scriptures and your knowledge of the Plan of Salvation will be magnified. Your testimony will grow and you will not be able to contain what you have learned and you will want to share with others your newly found love and respect coupled with gratitude for your Heavenly Father.

After you have accomplished the above then, read the History of the Church in all its volumes. Read Joseph Smith's Discourses, and the Journals of Brigham Young and any other books of good report. These books will acquaint you with the sacrifices the early saints had to endure and knowing their sacrifices will instill a sense of gratitude to your Heavenly Father and you will come to an understanding...you don't have it so bad after all.

You might think it is easy for me to say these things to you but, I'll let you in on a secret, I have done all these things except I didn't have the \$200 plus for the set of Brigham Young's journals, I could only read a few of them. When raising six children, \$200 could buy many groceries.

IN CLOSING

Brothers and sisters, when you are suffering from any of these "speed bumps" of life remember, Heavenly Father loves to show us how much he loves us by helping, healing, counseling, blessing and manifesting his spirit in what the world calls random acts of kindness, always with an eye focused on your deliverance and salvation.

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When you emulate your Heavenly Father and his actions to your fellow man, you plant the seeds of gratitude in their hearts and they become equal benefactors of our Heavenly Father's love.

Regardless of how severe you feel you are suffering remember **2 Corinthians 4: 17-18** "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*" In other words..."this too shall pass."

In closing my favorite scripture is taken from Doctrine and Covenants Section 121.

While Joseph Smith and his companions were imprisoned in Liberty Jail circa 1838, they suffered all manner of iniquities including poisoned meat. Prophet Joseph in verses 1 thru 6 pours out his soul to our Heavenly Father asking for regress and relief from this unbearable suffering and persecution.

In verses 7 & 8 the Lord replied, "*My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; 8 And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.*"

Brothers and Sisters, we as benefactors to these trials and tribulations are in themselves a blessing and we should always be grateful...they are necessary to our spiritual growth and progression. Therefore, we need to be grateful in all things good and bad.

Heavenly Father loves **ALL** of his children, these things I have shared with you in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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